

A Practical Guide

Harvest Season

Harvest season is busy. There is no getting around the enormous amount of work that gets done and the long hours that are worked to get through the season.

This guide isn't here to pretend that a different reality exists. As farmers ourselves, we know that there are only so many hands available to do the work in a very short timeframe – and this timeframe often becomes shorter due to major storm fronts, machinery breakdowns, and labour shortages. However, at Farmsafe Australia, we are committed to keeping you safer on Australian farms. *The best harvest is the one in which everyone got home safely.*

So we've created this guide to ensure everyone is **aware of the increased risk** at this time of the year, **properly prepared well in advance** and **have a few little tips and tricks** up their hi-vis sleeves.

Disclaimer: This information is intended as a general guide only and is designed to be used to increase risk awareness and safe work practices - it is not legal advice and does not take the place of proper individualised on-farm workplace inductions, work, health, and safety training or any other tailored steps which may be necessary to protect health and safety at specific worksites.

Remember!

- If anyone is **unsure of anything** or feels that something they have been asked to do is dangerous, they should NOT begin the task. Provide assistance or more information and work with them to find a safer way to do the job or solve the problem
- **Make sure everyone is fit for work**, free from signs of fatigue, drugs or alcohol.
- **Understand the side effects** (such as drowsiness) **of any medications** you (or your employees) have been on or start taking, including allergy medications.
- Farms are a workplace but may also be a place of residence. **Be vigilant for children and bystanders** at all times. Refer to Child Safety on Farms.
- Even if you are busy and under time or financial pressures, safety **MUST** come first.



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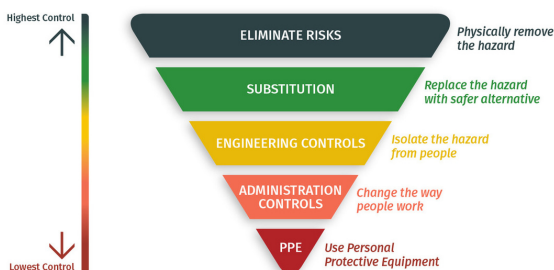
FIRST THINGS FIRST



5 Steps to Risk Assess

- Identify the Hazards
- Assess the Risks
- Establish Control Measures Using the Hierarchy of Controls
- Record the Findings & Implement
- Review & Update on a Regular Basis

HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS



Inductions

As an employer of full-time, part-time, casual and contract labour, you have a responsibility to induct your staff onto your farm. This is a very important part of ensuring you have provided all relevant information to everyone involved in your harvest, to keep them safe and healthy.

Contractors are a very important part of harvest. Many of them have their own safety management systems. However, it is still your responsibility to induct them onto your farm and ensure that they adhere to proper safety practices and procedures. Some of your harvest labourers may have worked on a farm before but;

- Have they worked on your farm?
- Do they know how you run your business?

Inductions must be documented. It is really important to have documentation to back up your induction and prove your processes, if ever necessary. There are a variety of ways to do this (laptop, diary/notebook, induction and training registers etc). Find what works best for you and your farm - just make sure that you keep up with the practice!

Injury Reporting

Ensure that the farm has an incident register and that all farm hands and contractors know where the register is located.

A process should be in place for reporting and recording all incidents and near misses on farm.

Risk Management & Mitigation



A MUST

Risk Management Tools

[DOWNLOAD ONLINE MATRIX](#)

Some people have a very different risk appetite than others. Some people may consider a situation risky and others may not. Use risk assessments as a **communication tool** to work out the best ways to assess and manage risks on farm.

You must consult with your employees and contractors on any matters, concerns or changes that may affect their health and safety. Click on [Risk Management Tool](#) to download a copy of our Toolbox Talk if you are looking for a template or information on risk management.

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Photo: Damian Edwards



Personal Reminders

Fatigue is a killer

Taking breaks and getting enough sleep is vital. Fatigue is often considered a major factor in harvest fatalities.

Farmer tans aren't funny!

Wear sunscreen and reapply as needed! A sunburn hurts but skin cancer can kill.

Heat stroke happens!

Know the signs and see a doctor if you think you've overcooked it.

Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate!

Drink plenty of water and always carry extra with you.

Harvest Healthy

Eat regularly and eat healthy - you are harvesting the healthiest food in Australia - invest in yourself by eating well!



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Work Clothes & PPE

Harvest workers require appropriate work clothing.

- Appropriate **work boots with non-slip soles**
- **Long pants** or suitable work shorts
- Shirts should be **long sleeved**
- **Hi-Visibility work shirts** are a safer option during harvest, to ensure that workers are easily spotted both during the day and at night
- It is important to check the materials that these shirts are made of and opt for **flame retardant or resistant fabrics**.
- Shirts should always be **tucked in** and sleeves should be either buttoned at the wrist or rolled tightly to reduce the risk of becoming entangled in machinery
- **Loose clothing and jewellery**, including cords on jackets or **laces on boots** can be **caught in moving parts of machinery** and should be avoided
- **Long hair must be tied back** to avoid entanglement or being caught in moving parts of machinery.
- **Wear a hat** -- Wide brimmed hats are preferred to provide protection from sunburns and heat stroke.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment will be necessary for some tasks undertaken during harvest season.

We have provided a few suggestions below;

- **Sunscreen and a wide brimmed hat** to protect skin from the sun
- **Eye protection** should be used; glare and dust are two reasons but there might be other situations that require eye protection
- **Face masks may be necessary** in situations (such as working with augers and silos) where dust inhalation is a risk
- **Ear protection** is important for excessive machinery noise (augers, generators, tractors etc)
- **Gloves** may be necessary
- **Helmets** should always be worn for motorbike or quad use

Remember – if PPE is provided for you, use it! If PPE hasn't been thought of, make sure you ask for it.

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Operational Reminders

Training is important!

All makes and models are not the same - make sure everyone has been given **proper instruction** in the machines they will be using.

REMEMBER - some States require **licensing** for some machinery - it is your duty to know which licenses are needed and check to ensure your employees have them!

Disengage & Park!

Always make sure **machinery is disengaged**, with hydraulics **lowered and fully in park** prior to exiting the cabin.

Children & Bystanders

Look out for children & bystanders **prior to moving any machinery** - use an alert signal (ie. beep 3 times) - make sure everyone is aware of the signal's meaning.



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Pre-Operational Machinery Checks & Maintenance

Inspect All Machinery and Equipment

- Review the **Manufacturer's guide** prior to use and maintenance checks
- **Never circumvent safety mechanisms**, this includes seatbelts!
- **Ensure appropriate guarding is fitted** to provide barrier protection from moving parts such as electrics, belts, hydraulics and Power Take Off (PTO) shafts on **all machinery and equipment**
- If you are removing a guard to undertake maintenance or clear a blockage, **make sure that the machinery or equipment is completely off and all moving parts have come to a complete halt** - and make sure you replace the **guard** prior to starting up again
- Check that **emergency stops** are installed and operational
- All tractors should be fitted with **Rollover and Falling Object Protection**
- Check **raising and lowering mechanisms** on machinery and make sure **hydraulic hoses are secured** appropriately
- Check **cabin air filtration systems** are clean and working properly. Replace filters or seals if necessary
- Check **headlights, taillights, windscreens and rear vision mirrors** are clean with good visibility
- Keep cabins of machinery **clean and tidy**
- Make sure the **first aid kit is fully stocked** and that an **appropriate fire extinguisher is present** in case of cabin fires or any other fire incidents
- Check **fuel, oil, water, transmission fluid levels**
- Check **tyre pressure and condition** and make sure **brakes** are working properly, including **park brakes**
- **Before working under any raised machinery**, ensure that the machine is completely supported and all chocks and blocks are securely in place.

Recording & Reporting

- Ensure that any machinery **issues, concerns or malfunctions**, or **missing or damaged guards** are **reported**
- Consult with your employees and contractors on any changes that need to be made as a result of reporting

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Risks & Hazards



Overhead Powerlines

Create **exclusion zones** around overhead powerlines. Augers should **not** be operated near powerlines and hydraulics should **not** be raised or lowered nearby.

Always use a spotter!

Working at Heights

Know the risks and ensure that **appropriate licensing** has been obtained - invest in **fall arrest harnesses** if necessary. **Remember** - ladders are considered working at heights!

Confined Spaces

Working in confined spaces is **high risk and may require licensing**. Be aware - you can **drown in grain** or suffocate from lack of oxygen, and the presence of **toxic levels of gas** in silos can cause **poisoning**.



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Augers

Augers have many hazardous components such as the auger screw, belts, winches and electrical systems – all of which can cause serious injury or even death. The most common deaths and injuries occur from electrocutions due to contact with overhead powerlines, amputations, lacerations and crush injuries.

- Always ensure augers have **proper guards fitted**
- **Never try to unblock an auger while it is in use** - always completely shut down the auger and wait until all moving parts have completely stopped moving prior to unblocking
- Auger flights should be **completely empty prior to shutting down** (unless in an emergency situation)
- Augers should always be in the **lowered and locked position** prior to moving them

Chaser Bins

It is really important to remember that you should **never get inside a chaser bin while augers are running**. The **tractor PTO should always be disengaged**, **hydraulics should be in neutral** and the **tractor should be completely turned off** prior to checking the emptying or ensuring there are no blockages. Always ensure there is no one in the chaser bin when it is restarted

Silos

Silos and field bins have a number of risks and hazards associated such as falling from heights, toxicity poisoning or suffocation when working in confined spaces

- Ensure all silos and field bins are structurally sound and all parts (including lids) are functioning properly
- Never enter a silo or field bin without training and PPE and always ensure there is a spotter outside with access to emergency communication tools if necessary.
- Working at heights is a high risk activity and should only be undertaken with proper training, PPE and a spotter present.

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In Case of Emergency

First Aid

Always ensure that **First Aid Kits** are well stocked and all supplies are in date.

Make sure all workers and contractors know **where the First Aid Kits are located** (you should have one in the cab of each piece of machinery!) and **who on farm is trained in First Aid**

Communication

It is critical that all workers have the **ability to communicate** with each other or to **call for help**. All workers should know the **farm UHF/VHF channel**, the **bush fire brigade channel** and where **mobile service** is and isn't on the farm.

In case of emergency Dial 000



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Fire Safety & Emergency Response

Harvest fires are a major hazard - whether they be paddock fires or whether they be machinery fires. It is **extremely important** that all workers and contractors;

- Know where the fire extinguishers are located
- Know where the fire blankets are located
- Know the bush fire brigade UHF channel
- Know where the water tanks, hoses and pumps will be positioned and *how to use them*

Farm Emergency Plans are important to have, test and communicate with all staff. **A good plan is the one that all workers and contractors know about.**

A Farm Emergency Plan should have (at the very least);

- all emergency contact information
- evacuation procedures
- emergency meeting place location
- procedure for notifying emergency services
- communication procedures to ensure all on farm are aware of the emergency situation

It is important to remember that **fire isn't the only emergency situation** that plans can be in place for around harvest. Other emergencies may include;

- electrocution
- heart attack
- workers trapped under or entangled in machinery
- loss of oxygen / toxicity poisoning

Moving Harvest Machinery via Public Roads

Harvest machinery and transportable augers must comply with **road transport legislation** (which may vary by State) and drivers need to ensure that all relevant licensing, signage, hazard lights, signal lights and escort vehicles are compliant and in good working condition. Remember - often **other road users become frustrated and drive erratically** around harvest transport vehicles - **be alert, be aware and drive to the conditions and capabilities of your vehicle.**



Child Safety

Active Supervision

We know that kids love farms & trucks & tractors & parents just want to teach their kids about what they love.

But **15% of fatalities on farm are children under the age of 15.**

If you have your child out in the fields with you, *for any reason*, they must be actively supervised by a responsible adult who is **ONLY supervising the child** - not multi-tasking.

HI - Vis Looks Good

Make sure your child **can be seen** whenever they are in the workplace!

No Children Under 16 on Quads

That includes doubling with their parents! Quad bikes are the number one cause of fatality on farms.

Just don't do it.



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Be a Harvest Hero

Be Proactive

Do your **risk assessments**, do your **pre-operational machinery checks**, make sure you have **PPE** ready for use, make sure the **water tankers** are ready in the paddocks and that the **hoses and pumps** are in **good working order**. Have **plenty of fuel on hand** and make sure your **mechanics** are on speed dial.

Keep an Eye on the Sky

Wild weather patterns can happen during harvest. Make sure you are paying attention to the weather and plan around it when you need to. Emergency situations such as **fires** or **injuries** may be more likely during harvest - **plan ahead** (with **water tankers** and **fire extinguishers**, **first aid kits** and **emergency planning procedures**).

Watch Out for your Mates

Be on the **lookout for risks and hazards** - use a spotter when there are **overhead powerlines**, work as a team if it is a **two person task**, know where all of your staff are, and **always check in on each other**, even if it is just a quick radio call.

Take a Break

Hydrate yourself, fuel yourself with **healthy food**, **rest** when you are tired. Your **physical and mental wellbeing** is top priority in pressure periods.

Remember Who You are Doing this For

Your **safety is the most important thing!** Jobs don't get done without you. But more importantly, you matter to your loved ones - **don't risk your life to save a few minutes or a few dollars.**



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